

ISSUE 5

April/May 1995

Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambs. CB6 2RA

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## EDITOR'S COLUMN - ISSUE 5

Never one to stand still, 8BIT MART is now 8BIT. This reflects the fact that although advertisements are still very much part of the whole, it is now primarily concerned with ideas and information for users of 8-bit computers.

To that end, this issue is by way of being a round-up of unfinished business. So, if I've omitted anything sent in recently, I'm sorry but will try to get it in next time.

Among items 'in the pipe' for the future I have a long piece on desktop publishing using an 8-bit computer and the optional extras to get the results you want onto the page and then into your prospective readers' hands.

Instead of simply concentrating on a single computer or program as other magazines have done, I have recruited a professional design consultant with years of experience in advertising and the news media. He has gone back to first principles of presentation and set out the fundamentals for 8BIT readers, including cost implications of the options at different stages.

He said he found it a challenging exercise to work within a smaller range of options than he is accustomed to, and during the couple of days we spent on the project, he said that all the 'rules/guidelines' of good design practice could be fully implemented on a poster, magazine, or other sort of publication produced using an 8-bit computer as the heart of the process.

## THE BIG SCOOP

Have we got a scoop? We *have* got a scoop. See page 12 for the big news. Sorry it did not make the front page, as such landmark stories should, but most of the layout work was done and I didn't want to delay the news by redesigning the whole thing.

## COMING SOON TO THESE PAGES

I would like to do a comprehensive feature on printed (rather than tape or disc) fanzines on 8-bit computers, but I need your help.

If you publish an 8-bit magazine please send me a recent copy so that I can tell the world what you are doing. Ideally, a letter with the frequency of publication and subscription rates would be appreciated as well.

If you subscribe to one of more of these small-press publications I'd like to borrow a recent issue to see what I, and others, are missing. I will return such copies promptly. Please don't leave it to someone else.

The only magazines I already have to hand (so don't need more of) are CHR\$(7), Cornwall PCW Club Newsletter, CPC User, The Disc Drive, Sixty-Four, and WACCI. Whether club publications or 'open subscription', I'd like to cover both. There is no comparison or judgement element in this; I just want to get the information on what's out there to a wider audience. Thanks to all those who helped. See you in June.

Brian Watson.



## Alchemist Research

Last issue I referred briefly to a huge folder of stuff sent to me by Andy Davis of Alchemist Research. As well as six PD discs of emulators for use on a PC, he has also sent me his information sheets on Alchemist, his PD catalogue, and a 3½" PCW-format disc stuffed with articles for 8BIT which is currently resisting all my attempts to read it (short of using a disc editor to transfer files sector by sector!). Not his fault, I'm sure - I'm just too impatient and short of time right now to do it properly. Once I have cracked it the contents will grace these pages in future issues of 8BIT.

I will try to summarise the 'paper' elements of his parcel:

- 1) Brief details are enclosed of the Spectrum +D/Disciple disk system. This can read its own, PC, and Opus Discovery disks. It can write its to its own format, and copy its own or PC discs.
- 2) The Spectrum +3 with a 3½" disk drive can read and write the following disks; its own, +D/Disciple, PCW, CPC, PC. It can format all the preceding except (except +D), to any size from 1k to 792k. So a very wide degree of compatibility is possible.
- 3) Andy is considering offering a conversion service between 3", 3½" and 5¼" PCW discs. Interested, anyone? If you are, contact him before he changes his mind.
- 4) Alchemist Research is a free Spectrum User Group established in 1986 and supporting all the main Spectrum formats plus some Amiga and PCW items. There is also ALCHNEWS, a tape and disc magazine which, among other things, has the rights to reproduce the SARUG, SINCLAIR NEWS, and INPUT series of magazines. At only £1 per issue for 3½" or 5¼" discs or tape it sounds indispensable, and even better value is a year's subscription for only £5. This also includes newsletters, the latest PD catalogue (with updates), plus company discounts and PD credits. It all sounds like a large, but well run outfit. I would be pleased to hear from members of the Group.
- 5) Alchemist PD claims to be the largest Spectrum PD library in existence (from its catalogue size - 21 pages of quite small print, I don't doubt it) with 3,000 titles currently available from an archive of 5,000. They are also supporting the MGPD Spectrum library and they are working to make all PD completely free of charge, but for now there is a small copying charge. Though I understand the time and cost implications of running a library the whole concept of PD is that it is supposed to be free, not a good way to earn a living out of someone else's efforts. So the freer the better, as far as I'm concerned.
- 6) Alchemist Software is the non-PD arm of Alchemist Research. Like 'Homebrew Software' suppliers serving other computers, it seeks to maintain high standards in small publishers' software and restrict its supply to reliable authorised distributors by denying full PD status. Alchemist Software has an extensive list of titles including a sound sample program, various magazine reissues, adventures, a disassembler, a Sam emulator, utilities including a word processor, and demos.
- 7) The Alchemist helpline service is for problem solving from afar. Just the job if your having problems with your hardware and software and there is no local User Club to join.
- 8) Alchemist CP/M is a user group primarily supporting the +3.
- 9) Star Users Club is a user group primarily supporting Spectrum users owning a Star printer. It is officially recognised by Star UK.

Whichever of the items above interests you, Andy Davis and Alchemist Research can be contacted at 62, Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse, SHEFFIELD S13 7LN.



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### PCW PROGRAMS FOR THE SPECTRUM?

I have been contacted by Jon Moss of JM Software for help. He is looking for someone to configure some of his programs, which are designed to run on PCWs under CP/M, for other machines. Generally, the configuration job is to do with the display and keyboard differences of other machines. If you can help please contact 8BIT in the first place as I have fuller details than I have space for in this issue.

\* \* \* \*

### A RUMOUR SQUELCHED

There is a certain nitwit who was quite deliberately putting it about last month that a widely distributed CPC magazine was about to start covering Spectrum matters in a bid to broaden its appeal. While there is no reason why it *should* not, it *is* not planning on doing so, so if the rumour comes your way, take it as the fiction it is. 8BIT - for the fairly reliable truth, most of the time.

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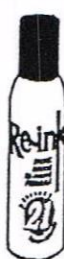
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## THE LAWYERS' PCW CLUB... Groups to Join... (in Locoscript and CP/M!)

Whenever a new file is created, it is placed in one of the 16 groups (numbered 0 to 15) on your disc available for this purpose. In fact, CP/M programs almost always use Group (or User #) 0. And Locoscript only uses Groups 0 to 7.

In Locoscript, the groups of files are shown in separate boxes at the foot of the disc management screen. Each group is given a name "group0" etc. to start with. You can alter the name to an 8 letter word by using f5 (Locoscript 1) or f4 (Ls2/Ls3) "Rename group". (To delete a group name, move to the group, press f6 (Ls1) or f3 (Ls2/Ls3), select erase file, type in LETTERS.GRP for a group called "Letters". The files in the group are unaffected, but the group name reverts to "group0".)

Another problem you may encounter with groups is if you wish to create a file in a group where there are no files at present. Pressing the left and right arrow keys on the Disc Management Screen cannot move into the group, as the group is simply not shown. Instead, hold down the [shift] key and now press the left, right, up or down arrow keys. As you do so, watch the top row of boxes on the screen, which show the details of the Disc. The cursor will move in the direction indicated by your arrow keys. You can in this way create a file in the new group, or copy one across into the new group, and the group can subsequently be used like any other.

Whenever you create a file (C from Disc Management Screen), the file you get to begin with is an exact copy of the file called TEMPLATE.STD (if any) in the same group. This is a useful feature, as the TEMPLATE.STD could contain, say, the layout for your notepaper (margins, tabs); perhaps some text to go on each document (closing times during holidays); your preferences as to pitch and justification. TEMPLATE.STDs would justify an article in their own right. It suffices to say that a skilled Locoscript user will have a different TEMPLATE.STD (in different groups and perhaps on different discs) for each type of document he creates. I have a TEMPLATE.STD for Club letters, another for personal letters (headed with just my address), another for articles, etc..

### Limbo

Anything stored on Groups 8 to 15 on a disc used in Locoscript is a limbo file. "Limbo" means in this context that the file is deleted, but can if necessary be recovered as the filename can be shown on screen using the f8 "Shown Limbo Files" option and then restored by moving over the filename and using f5 (Ls1) or f3 (Ls2/Ls3) "Recover from Limbo" option.

Files become limbo files (1) when you delete them, using f6 (Ls1) or f3 (Ls2/Ls3) or (2) when you move them off a disc, using f4 (Ls1) or f3 (Ls2/Ls3), the disc from which the file is moved retains a copy of the file in limbo or (3) when you edit a file, a version of the file before it was edited remains in limbo.

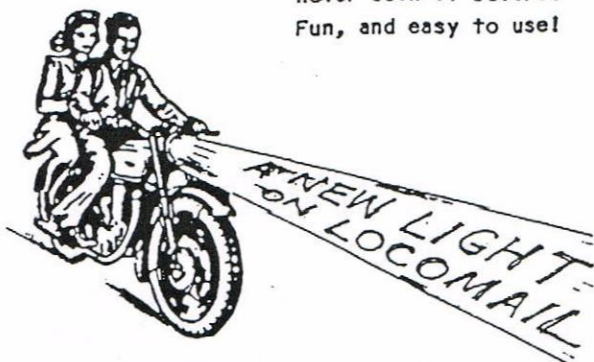
This limbo function is useful, as you can recover a file deleted by accident and you can often return to the original version of a file you have edited.

In Locoscript, limbo files are not taking up your disc space, as they are deleted whenever the space they occupy is needed. However, CP/M does not delete limbo files, which is why you are advised to use different discs for Locoscript and CP/M use. If you find inexplicable "disc full" errors when using CP/M or Basic, this is almost always the problem.

Club Enquiries to: Keith Simons, 10 Orrishmere Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire. SK8 5HP.



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The routines work with LocoScript/LocoMail versions 1, 2 & 3 - just state 3" or 3½" disc size and send a cheque for £9.50 to:-  
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## Attention All PCW Users!

Q. Are you hoarding software for the Amstrad PCW/PcW and which you no longer require?

Q. Are you looking to acquire a particular piece of software for your PCW?

Q. Does the cost of placing an advertisement in the national PCW magazines put you off?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes", then the PCW "Software-Link" database may be able to help you.

PCW "Software-Link" was conceived a year ago when it became clear that thousands of PCW users had odd pieces of software they no longer required, and many hundreds of users looking for a variety of software, especially those which are no longer in production. What was needed was a method of putting buyers and sellers touch with one another, hence PCW "Software-Link" was born, and has now assisted hundreds of PCW users.

Currently, there are some 250 individual pieces of PCW software registered on the database as being available for sale or exchange (including games, spreadsheets, word processing and utilities etc.), plus in the region of 100 separate pieces of software sought by a number of users.

To access the database for sales or purchases, there is a one-off (minimal) fee for a three month period. To obtain full details of how the service operates, and how it may assist you, simply send a large sae to:  
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PCW "Software-Link" is run as a service to PCW users on an entirely voluntary, non-profit-making basis.

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**LIFE2 £2.50 (size 26k):** Gun builder game, using a combination of chosen and random gliders, in as few time units as possible.

Gun  
shape



Glider -  
travelling North  
East, one square  
per 4 time units



Variable randomness (0-100%) to adjust playing difficulty.

Displaceable playing area: enables restriction of growth of an unwanted colony of cells by moving them to an edge or (better still) a corner.

"Unlike other versions of Life where there hasn't been much to aim for, this Life has a purpose."

November 1993 PCW Plus

This review recommends playing MAIL232 LIFE before considering the purchase of LIFE2.

If trying MAIL232 LIFE, note the following:

- If you normally define and use the function keys (F1, F2, etc.), these must be undefined;
- The message "Requires RS232C / Centronics Interface" may be ignored - it works without this;
- MAIL232 LIFE runs much more slowly than our programs, because of the playing area;
- The article on MAIL232 LIFE which accompanies the review shows a "simple glider". This is actually an 'Y' - not a glider.

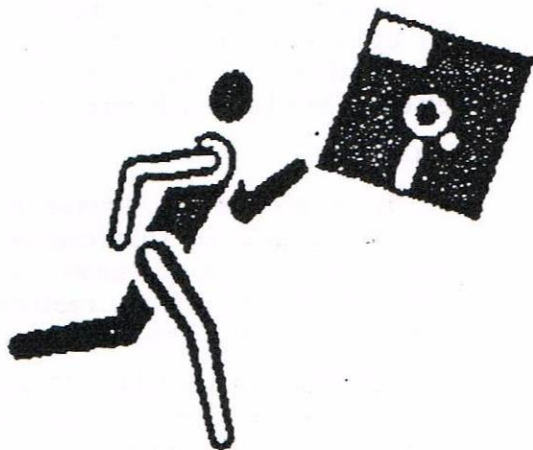
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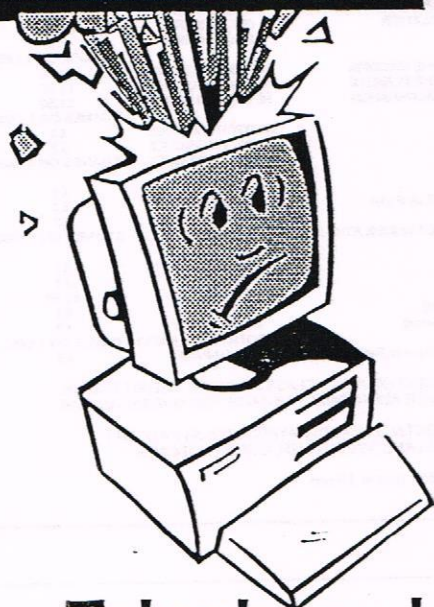
## PCW PD AND EXPERIENCES OF E-MAIL

I have received comprehensive details from Paul Westlake of PCW PD on E-mail and Internet connection. File Transfer Protocol is the Internet's original operation method. You send a request message to a ftp mailserver (approx one per country) as for any mail message on a BBS and logoff. It finds your files worldwide and puts them in your BBS postbox when done. This can take up to a couple of days due to demand. The BBS places markers on read files so you only get offered new items by default. Files use 8-bit transfer so download quickly, E-mail uses text (7-bit) so files are bulky, slow, and need conversion back to .COM format. John Elliot, a major CP/M author, has sent files to Paul to allow Locoscript to be used.

MKBBS is operated by Paul Bartlett (Paul B), who charges £15 a year + £1 per Mb Internet in/out; but comes with 2Mb on membership. BBS mail is free. MKBBS updates 3 times a day - too slow for commercial users but fine for us. Paul Westlake (Paul W) is still new himself as a user but has already started a CP/M forum. There are already other PCW/CPC/Spectrum users. Paul B won't allow a chat conference unless demand is shown, so for now the main MKBBS forum is used. If Paul W can get enough people together 2 areas (sys.cpm and sys.obsolete) will be opened. Paul Westlake has put four files (member.arc, internet.arc, unarca80.com and unarcz80.com) into the front end to be easily accessible by other 8-bit users. The only other .ARC Internet file is E-MAIL.ARC in FORUM: INTERNET but it is very large.

So, for PCW-PCW file transfers a posted disc is a cheaper option, but for cross-format file swaps E-mail can be quicker and more effective. Paul W has supplied full details, including a digest of new PCW-compatible CP/M programs, which runs to 3 pages of A4, but because of lack of space this time, I cannot go further into it more fully here now though I will return to it in later 8BITs. Drop Paul Westlake a disc with a large SSAE with an extra 1st class stamp for full details. His address for 720k discs and enquiries is: 27, Highley Close, Rifle Range Estate, KIDDERMINSTER, Worcs DY11 7NZ. Thanks Paul for taking the trouble to go into the subject so comprehensively.

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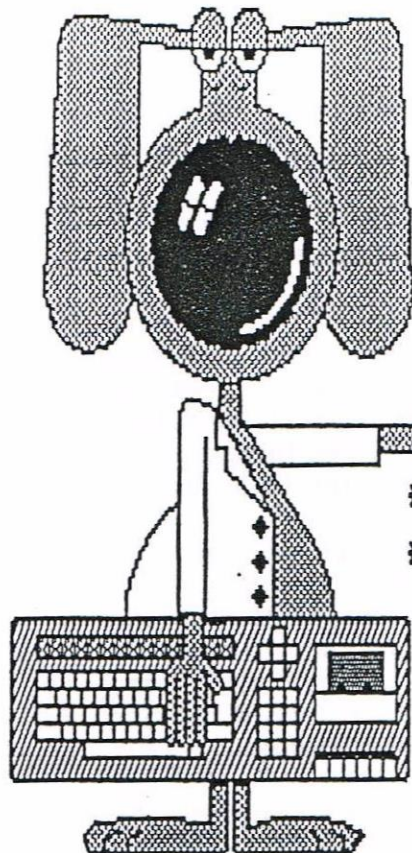
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3) Adverts for the next "8BIT" must be received by 15th May 1995

\* \* \* \*

AMSTRAD PCW - FOR SALE

Amstrad PCW8256 with Printer, RS232, manual and several programs incl Word Processor. Ideal for home office £100ono. Phone John 01929 554109 REF:L

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REF:F

AMSTRAD PCW - WANTED

Protext wanted. Also printer head for an Amstrad DMP2160 printer? Secondhand, or is there any supplier that still has them? Mr John Jordan, 13, The Green, Lanesboro, Co Longford EIRE REF:L

WANTED FOR A PCW: 'Grammatik' or any other program that checks Grammar on a PCW. Contact Jim French on 01268 415255. 14, Wheatfield Way, BASILDON, Essex SS16 6SN REF:K

WANTED: Rombo Vidi set-up for a PCW, complete with instructions. Must be working! Please send details of price etc to: Mike Elliston, 96, Sparrows Herne, BASILDON, Essex SS16 5EX REF: L

\* \* \* \*

WANTED: Protext wordprocessor in a recent version. It is to run on a PCW, but CP/M Protext as supplied for a CPC 6128 is the same. Please telephone: 01202 876807 if you can help. REF:F

PCW - MISCELLANEOUS

The Cornwall PCW Club meets on the second Saturday of each month in St Austell. All those interested in PCWs are most welcome to join us. Details from Kate Hadley on 01208 872720 or John Walker on 01752 (Plymouth) 706266 REF:F

COMMODORE - FOR SALE

COMMODORE C64 with power Supply, Datasette recorder, User manual and 30 games. As new condition. Bargain at £35 plus parcel post and insurance. Roy Firth, 7, Burned Grove, Shelf, HALIFAX HX3 7PU REF:F

C64 games for sale from £1 including Codemasters titles and many more. Interested? Contact Denise, 48, Eastern Avenue, CHIPPENHAM, Wilts. SN15 3LW. Send SSAE for lists REF:H

"FONTS FOR GEOS/1" - 21 original fonts for use with Geos. Most have multiple point sizes with pound (£) signs. Includes a graphic font to help design special dividers in your documents. 1541 disk. £3.99 including p & p in UK. Michael D Pearson, 31, Saxon Close, Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire CV37 7DX REF:F

Wanted: Commodore 64 contacts in Cheshire please. Tape or Disk. Leon 01606 861647. REF:J

Wanted! Vic 20 Software/Hardware etc. Contact: Leon 348, Station Road, Winsford Cheshire CW7 3DG. Tel: 01606 861647. REF:J

WANTED: COMMODORE FORMAT 40 (Jan 1994) in mint condition with/without covertape. Also Wanted - C64 cassettes in mint condition of: Jet Set Willy 1, Dictator by Dk'Tronics, Graham Souness International Soccer and Multimixx 5. Good prices paid. S Ross, 3, Deanbank Street, DUNDEE DD2 2EA REF:F



## COMMODORE - MISC

Is your Commodore keeping your eyes closed? Then open your eyes with this new C64 Disk Mag. It's packed with PD, reviews, and will soon have C64 fans contributions. Send £1.50 to Duncan Torrie, Tarriebank, Home Farm, Marywell by Arbroath, Angus, DD11 5RE Scotland. REF:E

SIXTY-FOUR! Is an exciting new fanzine dedicated to Commodore 64 computers. It contains all sorts of C64-related material and even comes with a cover disk from issue 3 containing exclusive demos of upcoming games. Issues 123 now available. For more information write to SIXTY-FOUR! 5, Crane Avenue, Yaxley, PETERBOROUGH, Cambs PE7 3JH or you can phone Martin Haywood between 6pm and 7pm on 01733 (Peterborough) 245554. REF:L

## AMSTRAD CPC - FOR SALE

For Sale: CPC6128 with colour monitor, internal drive, cassette player, Multiface 2, joysticks, games and serious software incl Mini-Office II and Maxam II. Blank discs. Amstrad Action 53-82, ACU Jan '90-May '92, CPC Attack 1-6, For details phone Chris Oldfield: 01494 (High Wycombe) 565570 REF:E

Amstrad CPC6128 with green screen monitor, manual, CP/M System Discs, Joystick, Tasword and Mastercalc £50. Light gun + games disc for 6128, £10. Games and serious software, disc and tape. Send SSAE for list: Bob, 55 Den Lane, Springhead, OLDHAM OL4 4NN or Telephone: 0161 620 2118 REF:E

Amstrad CPC464 games for sale: Kick off, Hypersports, Gary Lineker's Superstar Soccer, 4 Soccer Sims, Peter Beardsley's Intl. Football, Werewolves of London, and Cricket Crazy 50p each Phone 01827 260729 (Tamworth, Staffs) after 7pm REF:F

Amstrad CPC drive A belts (flat type) with fitting instructions: £2.45 including p&p from Mr AJ Howard, 65, Altyre Way, BECKENHAM, Kent BR3 3ED REF:F

BUMPER BUNDLE of CPC Software for sale, mainly games, some utilities. 146 boxed tapes with instructions, 40 unboxed tapes with no instructions, 28 boxed discs with instructions. For sale as one lot at only £50 ono. (List is available for further information). Steve Lee, 48, Field Road, Ramsey, HUNTINGDON, Cambs PE17 1JP. Telephone: 01487 814043. REF:F

LOADS OF CPC goodies for sale: Tapes, Discs, Roms, Books, Mags. Send A4 SSAE: Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ. REF:F

BARGAIN CPC GEAR: CPC6128 Computer with Internal drive, colour monitor, MP2 modulator, Romboxes, a Fleet EPROM programmer, new and used blank EPROMS, an RS232 interface, joysticks, a Dart Scanner, ABBA and 3rd drive switches, FD1 drives, Multiface 2, Lightpen, RAM-ROM, Training System, Serious and games software, Amstrad Action cover-tapes, manuals, clip art, new 3" and 3½" discs, disc boxes, covers, and more. Phone for list. David 0181 519 9423. REF:F

## AMSTRAD CPC - WANTED

WANTED: Extras for Protect on disc. Also wanted light pen, etc. Please write to 5, Kings Road, Radipole, WEYMOUTH, Dorset DT3 5ES or Phone: 01305 787083, after 3pm please, and ask for Ashley. REF:E

WANTED AMSTRAD ACTIONS. Details of dates, cover tapes and price wanted for each to David Freeman, 24, Sandays Close, The Meadows, NOTTINGHAM NG2 2NP. Can collect within reasonable distance depending on quantity for sale. REF:I

Amstrad CPC games wanted. Willing to buy collections. Details to: John, 78, Holtdale Avenue, LEEDS LS16 7SG REF:F

WANTED FOR A CPC: Comparator Disc Utility from Verysoft - £15 offered + p&p. Also wanted: Reversiboard, and Amstrad Actions 1, 2, 33, 47 and 54. write to Peter Curgenven, The Hollyar Bay Road, Trevone Bay, Near Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8QZ REF:H



**AMSTRAD CPC - WANTED contd..**

WANTED Keyboard for CPC6128. Would consider 'complete with monitor' but must be able to post or deliver. Phone 01203 362063 or write to: Ray Neal, 56, Houldsworth Crescent, COVENTRY, CV6 4HJ REF:L

Wanted for CPC: Pipeline Software games and utilities as mine have corrupted (I have proofs of receipt.) I am also looking for 'Dark Side' (Freescape) and 'Scapeghost' by Level 9 Adventures on disc. Help also wanted on 'Driller', machine code, and a Multiface. Contact Nicholas Campbell on 01238 541716 or write to me at: 24, Ballyminstragh Road, Killinchy, Newtownards, Co Down, Northern Ireland BT23 6RE REF:E

Wanted for the Amstrad CPC 6128: these ADVENTURES ON DISC - Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy (Infocom), Ingrid's Back (Level 9), Old Scores (Global Software), these GAMES ON DISC - Knight Games (English Software), Meltdown (Alligator), AMSTRAD ACTION MAGAZINES issues 1-7 inclusive. Cover price offered. Contact: Mrs Jo Wood, 38, Stonehill Drive, Rooley Moor, ROCHDALE, Lancs OL12 7JN. Telephone: 01706 861185 REF:F

WANTED: Amstrad Action issues 2 and 109. £5 paid for each. Please phone Tyron on 01554 810521. REF:E

WANTED: Protext wordprocessor in a recent version. It is to run on a PCW, but CP/M Protext as supplied for a CPC 6128 is the same. Please telephone: 01202 876807 if you can help. REF:F

Amstrad Actions 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 - Reasonable price paid. Also the game "Quack-A-Jack" on Tape or Disc. Contact: Mrs. Christine Raisin, 117, Tilbury Rise, Cinderhill, NOTTINGHAM NG8 6DE. Tel: 0115 9765163. REF:N

'ROMBO ROMBOX' wanted for original Amstrad CPC 6128. State the price wanted. Apply: Mr RE Hobday, 43, Cody Road, Clapham, BEDFORD, Beds. MK41 6ED REF:F

'DISC BASE' with manual for the Amstrad CPC. £6 (incl p&p.) RE Hobday 43, Cody Road, Clapham, BEDFORD, Beds MK41 6ED REF:F

CP/M Protext wanted (Same as PCW version). Also Easywriter (originally published by Interceptor). Still need a printer head for an Amstrad DMP2160 printer? Secondhand, or is there any supplier that still has them? If so, please let me know the supplier's name and address. Mr John Jordan, 13, The Green, Lanesboro, Co Longford EIRE REF:L

**CPC - MISCELLANEOUS**

IMPACT - Yes this *crazy* discmag can be yours, free! For a copy send a disc and SSAE to: IMPACT, 53, High Lane, Burslem, STOKE-ON-TRENT, Staffs. ST6 7DF. Issues 3-5 available (please state which when ordering). Issues 1-2 were killed by my 3½" drive but can be obtained from RSPD (address in AA Amscene directory) REF:F

KING ARTHUR'S DOMAIN PD Library for all CPCs. Send 3" or 3½" disc + SSAE: KAD, *Brympton Cottage*, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ. REF:F

ARE YOU A FRUSTRATED AMSTRAD CPC USER seeking help and support? Then why not join the United Amstrad User Group for a bi-monthly magazine, free PD material, concessions and support, all for £8 per annum. Send SSAE to Gordon Wooliscroft, 2, Wrenbeck Drive, Otley, West Yorkshire LS21 2BR for details. REF:F

Free PD to all readers of 8BIT. Adventures, Games, Demos, Slide Shows, for the AMSTRAD CPC. PD supplied on 3" and 3½" discs. Send SSAE for details and PD list to PD *Fun Folly Farm Cold Ashton* CHIPPENHAM Wilts SN14 8JR. REF:E

Bonzo's Scrapyrd number 11 now available. The newsletter for CPC tape to disc transfers via the Bonzo suite of programs. Price - a large SSAE plus an extra 1st class stamp. From: Bonzo's Scrapyrd, 29, Chapter Road, Strood, ROCHESTER, Kent. ME2 3PX REF:F



## CPG - MISCELLANEOUS contd

GD.PD: The ultimate in PD software at only 25p per disc side (copy charge) for your Amstrad CPG. For the GD.PD list send an SSAE to: Dave Stitson, 6, Connaught Avenue, Mutley, PLYMOUTH, Devon PL4 7BX REF:L

## SINCLAIR SPECTRUM - FOR SALE

SPECTRUM: Please send SSAE for list of hardware, software and books. comprehensive list. Roy Firth, 7, Burned Grove, Shelf, HALIFAX HX3 7PU. REF:F

Alphacom 32 printer £15 + p&p. Multiface 3 £15. Datel Joystick interface £5. ZX81 16k Ram pack £5. Phone Eifion 01745 (Abergele) 332122 after 6pm. REF:L

Spectrum Games for sale, SSAE for list. John, 78, Holtdale Avenue, LEEDS LS16 7SG REF:F

## SINCLAIR SPECTRUM - WANTED

WANTED: Enhanced Basic, Beta Basic or similar, for a Plus 3. Mr RK Cann, 17 Sir Ivor Place, Dinas Powys, South Glamorgan CF64 4QZ. Tel: 01222 514484. REF:E

Does anyone have a +D or Disciple interface for sale? Oh, and I'd still like a Sinclair flat screen TV. Phone Eifion 01745 (Abergele) 332122 after 6pm. REF:L

WANTED FOR A SPECTRUM +2A. Any print and/or graphics programs. Output to be printed out on an Epson printer. Also wanted: Any old platform and ladder games. Any Plus D owners who would like to share any information or discs write to: John Turner, 58, Burnside, PARBOLD, Lancs WN8 7PE REF:I

## MISCELLANEOUS

Dragon games wanted. John, 78, Holtdale Avenue, LEEDS LS16 7SG REF:F

Dragon 32 For sale. £20 + post. John, 78, Holtdale Avenue, LEEDS LS16 7SG REF:F

BBC WANTED: Does anyone know of a BBC Computer User group?: Write to Mr AJ Howard, 65, Altyre Way, BECKENHAM, Kent BR3 3ED REF:F

APPLE II COMPUTER, also an Apple II monitor plus manual. Offers Please phone John 01929 554109 REF:L

WANTED: A SHEETFEEDER for a Canon BJ10ex printer. If you can help please telephone: 01202 876807 REF:F

BBC WANTED: "The L Game", a text adventure for the BBC series of computers. I Will pay £5. Rob Watson, "Harrowden", 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs. CB6 2RA or any evening you can Telephone: 01353 777006 REF:L

## THE NOTICEBOARD

I hope you went after one of the cheap Spectrums being offered by OXFAM through the last issue of 8BIT Mart. This very worthy organisation get a number of items of interest to 8-bit computer users handed in to their shops for resale.

What they have to offer tends to be pretty irresistible at the prices asked, especially when you consider they are all checked for electrical safety before resale. Whether you want a spare computer or want to have a go with a different one they should be worth a try. Collection needs to be arranged from the shop in ESHER, Surry, but if you will find this a problem, give me a call on 01353 777006 and I am sure we can work something out.

Brian Watson

THE INDEPENDENT 8-BIT ASSOCIATION (IEBA) This is an information service for Users and Groups. They issue a quarterly newsletter and have special offers for members. Membership costs just £1 for individuals, or £4 for businesses, user groups, or services. For more information write to either: Martin Scholes at 5, Beacon Flats, Wellington, TELFORD, Shropshire TF1 1RG or D Blackburn, 33, Dawley Bank, TELFORD, Shropshire TF4 2LQ. Enclose an SSAE for your reply.



## The 8BIT Comic Supplement

### WEIRD WIRED WORLD - 1

Hmm! I wonder how many of the PD libraries with old phone code finder programs will be updated in time for the BT changeover (Sunday April 16th). Now I think of it, that's a nice little job for a Sunday afternoon - going through all your database files changing the numbers. But beware of the five exchanges which do not change in the same way as the others.

For your information the exchanges which are affected, other than by just adding the '1' after the initial '0', are as follows: Bristol (0272) which becomes 01179, Leeds (0532) becomes 01132, Leicester (0533) which becomes 01162, Nottingham (0602) becomes 01159 and, lastly, Sheffield (0742) which becomes 01142. As the date for the reorganisation of the BT codes gets closer, I have been through all the current 8BIT small ads and either put in the '1' after the initial '0' or changed the code completely to the new version.

And lastly, if all UK telephone numbers, except about 100 service numbers such as 999 and 1471 for last dialler check, begin with '0', why doesn't BT do itself a favour and drop it? Think of the vast amount of time and trouble it would save us, the subscribers. If the new '1' digit is to allow for the later introduction of a '2' series within the same areas as currently being changed to 01???, the '0' is still surplus to requirements. Or am I missing something? And can anyone explain to me why four of the five special cases happen to be my most frequently dialled exchanges outside London?

### WEIRD WIRED WORLD - 2

As a follow-up to the recent piece on "The Great BT Non-Hacking Story" (see issue 3) I am pleased to advise 8BIT readers that my informant now tells me the maintenance person responsible for the "Great Non-Hack" is (allegedly) now employed by a large insurance company, so keep an eye on your no-claims bonus when you get a renewal through. You may find you are now getting the benefit of the Royal Family's fleet discount! Thank you again, Cicero, for that one.

### WEIRD WIRED WORLD - 3

The other day I thought I was in for a phone bill the size of the national debt of a medium size third-world country. My daughter had phoned her boyfriend on Sunday night and left the phone off the hook until Monday morning - 12½ HOURS!

Just a little panic-stricken, I phoned BT. A very helpful person said that although he couldn't check for sure until the following day, there is a cut-off which breaks contact if there is no 'line activity' for a few minutes. Fine; I breathe again.

But then the helpful BT person goes on to ask whether I'd like a new phone, quite free. No catch involved; it's all part of the deal - if you rent your first (or only) phone from BT, and most people do, you are entitled to a free update from time to time. They even send you a prepaid bag to return the old one, so you don't even have to fork out for the postage cost.

Our new one has all the usual stuff, apart from no Mercury button (no surprise there), including 10-memories, plus pre-coded special facilities including call waiting, three way conferencing, reminder call and call diversion buttons. OK, the extra services cost a bit to get signed up but we have taken call waiting on a three month free trial. All I have to do now is remember to cancel it after the three months. But then again, it has been quite useful so far....



## SUPPLIERS DIRECTORY

The most common grumble is the few retailers now stocking 8-bit hardware, games, and other software. While it is true that you may need to pack personal supplies for a fortnight if you are seeking out shops who keep a decent range, there *are* still suppliers who hold stocks of 8-bit kit and can supply by mail-order. Do bear in mind that items such as printers, ribbons, discs and other consumables may be held by *any* of the companies listed, regardless of their specialism.

I will publish the list of suppliers every few issues, in 8BIT. This will not cover publishers unless they stock items other than their own work. Appearance on the list should not be taken as a recommendation as I may not have personal experience of their service.

If you can help with this project by suggesting 8-bit stockists you know are good and reliable, I would be pleased to hear from you, or them. The list is believed accurate but please contact them before sending them your cheques! The information is in the format: Company Name, Address Details, Phone, Computers covered, Visa/Mastercard?

A-Z Computers, 134, Heath Road, TWICKENHAM, TW1 4BN PCW ACC/BCARD

Computer Cavern, 9, Dean Street, MARLOW, Bucks SL7 3AA Tel: 01628 891101 VARIOUS

The Computer Man, the shopping Centre behind ASDA, Shipley W Yorks - this is an unofficial address, I found them last weekend with a decent pair of spinners of 8-bit tapes. Could someone in the area check them out? Tell them 8BIT sent you. SPEC/CPC/C64. ACC/BCARD.

Dunning Computer Services, Unit 13c, Sunrise Business Park, Higher Shaftsbury Road, BLANDFORD FORUM, Dorset DT11 8ST Tel: 01258 480659 CONSUMABLES ACC/BCARD/SWITCH

The Electric Boys, 917b, Brighton Road, PURLEY, Surrey CR8 6BP C64

Eureka Software, 294, Old Chester Road, BIRKENHEAD, Merseyside, L42 3XD SPECTRUM

Everglade, 68, Telford Street, INVERNESS, Scotland, IV3 5LS Tel: 01463 240168 SPECTRUM C64

F9 Software/Sam PD, 18, Mill Lane, Old Skelmersdale, Lancs WN8 8RH Tel: 01695 31163 SAM

Greenweld Electronics, 27, Park Road, SOUTHAMPTON, Hants SO15 3UQ Tel: 01703 236363 VARIOUS

Merline, *Brympton Cottage*, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ Tel: 01903 206739 VARIOUS

Microform, 191, Watling Street Road, Fulwood, PRESTON, Lancs PR2 4AE Tel: 01772 701248 PCW mainly ACC/BCARD

Oasis Computer Services, 14, Ridgeway Road, SALISBURY, Wilts SP1 3BU Tel: 01722 335061

Ocean Computer Services, PO Box 68, North DO., MANCHESTER, M8 9NJ Tel: 0161 740 9002 QL and others

OJ Software, 273, Mossy Lea Road, Wroughtington, Nr WIGAN, Lancs WN6 9RN Tel: 01257 421915 CPC also Printers and consumables



## SUPPLIERS DIRECTORY - contd

Omnidale Supplies, 8e, Rowan Court, Friar Gate, DERBY DE1 1BU Tel: 01332 291219 SPEC

PCW World Ltd, Meadway Court, Bloomfield Street North, Halesowen, W MIDLANDS, B63 3RE Tel: 0121 585 7424 PCW

Phoenix Software Systems, 19, Lyme Avenue, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 7RS Tel: 01625 617262 SAM software

Siren Software, Wilton House, Bury Road, Radcliffe, MANCHESTER, M26 9UR Tel: 0161 724 7572

Soft Options, 151, Balsusney Road, KIRKALDY, Fife KY2 5LH VARIOUS

Softsell (EBM), 32, Dursley Road, TROWBRIDGE, Wilts, BA14 ONP Tel: 01225 769331 (7am-7pm Mon-Sat only) SPEC

The Software Shop, 48, High Street, RENFREW, Renfrewshire, PA4 8QP Tel: 0141 885 2830 SPEC

Trading Post, Victoria Road, Shifnal, Salop TF11 8AF Tel: 01952 462135 VARIOUS

TVA Services (shop address): 100, Nantwich Road, CREWE, Cheshire CW2 6AT Tel: 01270 500031 Mail order service through Leon Bebbington: 348, Station Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 3DG or phone him on 01606 861647 VARIOUS

WN Richardson, 6, Ravensmead, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 0NB Tel: 01494 871319 SPEC QL VISA/MC

WAVE, 1, Buccleuch Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 1SR Tel: 01229 870000 CPC SPEC VISA/MC

West of Britain Business Services Ltd, Enterprise House, Beechwood Industrial Estate, Llandeilo, DYFED SA19 7HR PCW

Wizard Games, 1, North Marine Road, SCARBOROUGH, YO12 7EY Tel: 01723 376586 VARIOUS VISA/MC

Zenobi, 26, Spotland Tops, Cutgate, ROCHDALE, Lancs OL12 7NX SPECTRUM

### The UNITED AMSTRAD USER GROUP for the Amstrad CPC series

The UAUG was founded in 1986 by a group of CPC-owning enthusiasts. It is now well established with a very friendly and supportive membership throughout the world. They feel they have been so successful because not only do they offer many of the same services as other computer owner clubs but they do so for a low membership fee; just £8 for their UK members, £11 for Europe, and £15.25 for the rest of the world.

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## MORE VERY ATTRACTIVE SHORTS

I am advised by Leon Bebbington (yup, him again) that there is a program called 'Big Blue Reader' for C64s to read Mac and PC discs. For more information contact Leon at 348, Station Road, WINSFORD, Cheshire CW7 3DG or phone him on 01606 861647.

Can you believe this nonsense? - I was looking for a copy of Commodore Format in a city centre branch of 'a certain national newsagent' and when I couldn't find one (on the tenth of the month) I checked with the news manager to see whether it had come in. To answer my question, he opened the stock control log which records the number of each magazine received, the number sold, and the remainders (if any) for each title each month.

Being a former newsagent manager, I asked him why, if he had received 6 copies last month and sold them all (as shown) he had reduced his order this month by a  $\frac{1}{3}$  to just 4 copies.

"Ah," replied Mastermind, "that's because it's a magazine for a computer that's not *made* anymore." "I see," I replied, innocently, "so presumably it's not *used* anymore either?" "That's right," acknowledged the sage - I'd obviously got the message. "So who bought the 4 you *did* get this month, I wonder?" I asked. "I couldn't say, sir," he said, as the ground opened up under him. "I should add a couple next month, if I were you," I suggested as I left his shop to spend my 'hard-earned' elsewhere. No wonder we keep wondering if the remaining CPC, C64 and PCW magazines have ceased publishing if nitwits like him are doing the ordering.

## A THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

"The fear of danger is 10,000 times more frightening than danger itself." This is from Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe. Lower your daily fear quotient by regularly backing up your work...

## THE LAST WORD

My apologies to everyone whose submissions have not made it into 8BIT this time. I had hoped to get in several lengthy review pieces on other publications received since the last issue, but either enough space was not available on one page, or the deadline beat me, or my attempts to maintain a balance of content ruled against inclusion this time. For reasons which I hope are obvious after reading the piece on the new Amstrad, I had a particular date to aim for when 8BIT hit your mat. It's a bit of a gamble running it, but I hope you feel it was worth doing, just this once.

I try to handle all queries received here by a paragraph insertion in the magazine if possible, but really a small advertisement to arrive well before copy date is a better bet for reaching the help of the readership. Alternatively, see if there's a specialist user group who might be able to offer help in your hour of need. The advertisement is free after all, so you've no excuse! There really is not enough time in the day for me to answer individual enquiries - this is supposed to be part-time for me and if you knew what else I'm involved in it would probably make you wonder how 8BIT ever gets done at all, let alone (almost) on time.

Several companies and user groups have offered 8BIT free advertising, but I've been too busy lately to DTP the leaflets they have requested. Maybe next month I'll get round to it. Thank you for the kind comments; it makes it all worth while. See you in June.

Brian Watson



I'm Tom Dean of the CPC PD discmag IMPACT. In this issue I'll be covering the best CPC demos and utilities, but since there's so many, I cannot tell you about them all here, so I'll just list the elite.

THE DEMO by Logon System (1991): THE classic demo. It contains 7 parts (including a menu) and most are of high quality, though some are not.

FACE HUGGER'S ULTIMATE MEGADEMO by Face Hugger (1992): This is regarded as the best demo ever by most people. It contains 9 parts on 1 disc side (great crunching) with an intro, lots of vector balls and stuff like that. Get it if you like vectors and amazing effects.

VOYAGE 1993 by Alien and PDT of Symbiosis, with guest Face Hugger (1993): Another megademo, this contains 7 parts including a great intro, a menu part, cheat parts, etc. The menu, intro and others are a bit dodgy on a version 1 CRTG. Great if you like wobbly line or pixelised vectors and vector balls).

MADNESS by Gozeur of Contrast (1994): Brilliant; with excellent mode splitting routines, plasma effects, amazing parallax chessboards, 3 tunes, rasters, crazy scrolls, NO vectors (hurrah!) and more all in 1 part! Has to be seen to be believed.

Almost anything by New Way Cracking (1986/1987 - 1990 I think): Classic demos, even though they are old they're great. The routines might not be the best, but who cares? Great demos are: KILL-JL, NOT-DEAD DEMO, REMIX-I, and more!

Next, the best PD utilities for your CPC, so let's start the ball rolling.....

VDE 2.66 (CP/M): Excellent CP/M word processor. The instructions are quite hard to follow, but all WACCI .DOC files usually are (have you ever seen "machine code helper"?). When you sort it out it's great, but can crash. CP/M, remember?

DISC 'O' MAGIC 4.1 (shareware): Excellent multi-purpose disc utility which lets you format, copy, rename, erase, repair discs, etc. Cannot handle funny formats though.

CRIME 1.8: Like Disc 'O' Magic, but this only copies discs. Requires 2 disc changes (large buffer) as opposed to the 3 needed for D'o'M. Pretty good.

CRUNCHER and TURBO IMPLODER/CHEESE CRUNCHER: I don't know about these. Some people prefer the German Cruncher and Turbo Imploder (written by Crown of BENG!) and some the French Cheese Cruncher (by Antoine of MMPF). Crunch and Imploder don't require a decrunch routine (automatic) but I think Cheese does. Cheese is faster and more user friendly though.

DMON: Sector editor - very powerful and easy to use (as opposed to some commercial editors such as RAMDOS, MAXIDOS, DISCOLOGY etc.)

FLIK: This is 128k only, and allows people to flip between the first and second banks of 64k by pressing <CONTROL><SHIFT><TAB>. Some programs could erase the routine in memory though.

SOUNDHAKKER PRO: This is a utility which allows you to rip Soundhacker tunes from games and demos. Best when installed into a Hackit/MultiFace 2, at the touch of a button no tune (well, nearly) is safe.

POWERPAGE version whatever, they're all good! The number one DTP package, by Richard Fairhurst. Nearly every CPC fanzine around is produced using this! Loads of options, and easy to use.

Most can be obtained through any PD library, but a lot of libraries are not very good. IMPACT gives a list of c\*\*p PD libraries as well as good ones.....[in his opinion-BW's lawyer] See you in the next 8BIT MART!



## PCW LOCOSCRIPT TO CPC PROTEXT

This sort of file conversion should be easy. PCWs and CPCs used 3" discs, and both can be upgraded to accommodate 3½" drives. Both can accept or create ASCII files, and were made by Amstrad. So when I got a phone call to say that someone was having difficulties loading files containing the parts of a 'names and addresses' list created by Locoscript with files, but which had (he said) been converted to CPC format, I fell for it. "Pop it in the post," I said, "I'm sure I can sort that out for you."

Wrong. Nothing I tried on the files worked, and eventually I came to the conclusion I would have to go back to square one. All was not lost thanks to the kind assistance of Jim French at the South Essex PCW Club. He took the original PCW9512 disc, converted the files to ASCII versions, then transferred them to a CPC format disc which I supplied. No problem so far.

However, although a PCW's smaller format drive is backwardly compatible to the extent that it can read files from a 178k CPC-formatted disc without difficulty, it seems that when it writes to it the directory is not in a CPC-recognisable format. So when you try to load the files into your CPC word processor, even if it is CP/M Protext (as near to a shared program between the two as there is) it will catalogue the disc OK, but try to load a file and it reports 'file not found.'

Is your editor a quitter? [darned nearly.] I have a utility suite called DES, available on disc or ROM from Campursoft, which is very tolerant of discs with the scent of PCWs about them. My solution was to take the CPC disc with the dodgy directory and converted files and transfer them to *another* CPC disc using DES. Other file copiers may work as well: I struck lucky with this. Whether this 2nd disc is in standard format or one of the big format systems seems to make no difference - as the files go across a new directory is created which is 100% CPC and the files will now load into Protext (or almost any other WP). If you think you may find yourself with this problem, hunt out the Campursoft advertisement in 8BIT as I can now recommend DES for this purpose from personal experience. By the way, if anyone else would like help with similar problems, I'M OUT!

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## BONZO-RETURN OF A LEGEND

There is a suite of CPC tape-to-disc copying programs luxuriating in such titles as Bonzo's Hack Pack, Bonzo's Doo Dah, and so on. As a software alternative to the 'Black Box' solution, they work very well but have the potential difficulty of needing a constantly updated directory of the Bonzo solutions for the various protection systems in use. This is where Bonzo's Scrapyard, a newsletter, comes in.

Now edited by Dave Caleno, the newsletter keeps users of the various Bonzo utilities informed as new and reissued programs fall to the power of the various copying options available. The presentation is very clear indeed (laser-printed?) and there are news items and listings as well as a list of CPC-related magazines and 8-bit suppliers.

Dave has kindly offered to do a history of the newsletter which should make interesting reading for all; it has been going for a long time and still thrives, and in the 8-bit world that is something of an achievement.

Definitely a *must* for those with a large tape collection of CPC programs to put to disc. For a copy send an A4 SSAB + an extra 1st class stamp to: Mr D Caleno, Bonzo Scrapyard, 29, Chapter Road, Strood, ROCHESTER, Kent ME2 3PX.



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Firstly, a small correction to the first part of this article which appeared in issue 4. It stated that the expansion port accommodates the 3½" disk drive. Well that is true but it only accommodates the TIB 3½" disk drive. Not the 1581 etc. Perhaps I didn't make that clear enough first time. Sorry, everyone.

As I was saying last time, just what *is* the C64 best at? It's hard to say exactly. OK, so you couldn't do such things without a strong knowledge of 6510 machine code and the way the C64 actually works, and due to the memory restrictions (ie 64k) you couldn't successfully use, say, interlacing in a game unless it was a stripped-down version of Pong, with interesting backdrops. However, these effects are commonly used in Public Domain demos and some of the simpler ones (such as multiplexors, colour mixing and sampling) are used in games.

I suppose that where the C64 does excel is in its sound chip. SID (Sound Interface Device) is one of the best sound chips in any 8-bit computer and is better than some 16-bit sound chips. The reason that SID is so good is because it is a full 3-channel, 7-octave synthesizer that can be used during any operation without slowing the computer down, even during tape or disk loading. Whereas in a Speccy 48K you get the odd beep, on a C64 you can play a full tune or realistic effect, well, depending on what effect you want it to play. You can even run 12 seconds of Amiga-quality samples - the 12 seconds at the Amiga's output quality takes up just under 64k!

Not everything is good and well on the old '64. You (assuming you are one of the world's top c64 programmers) can programme in these effects, but you're stuck to just 64k. It's like having a PC with just 1 Megabyte: it may seem a lot but you can't do anything really spectacular like fully-sampled music, interlaced digitised backdrops, parallax scrolling at full speed all in a game, all at once. To do anything that will gobsmack your average SNES owner, you would have to throw out that old Datacorder, buy a disk drive, and upgrade your machine to 1 Megabyte plus. This is the equivalent of a 16 Megabyte PC, by the way. This would put the C64 back on top of the home computer pile once more.

Unfortunately the RAM links (adding 1-16M of RAM) and the 1541 and FD 3½" disk drives just are not selling. I suppose us few can only dream of the C64's potential with more than 64k and the tape loaders.

Well, I don't want to use up the whole mag, but if you're having loading problems with your C64, send an SAE with a full explanation of your difficulties. Mr LS Bebbington, 348, Station Road, WINSFORD, Cheshire CW7 3DG

Leon Bebbington.

Please Note: Leon has submitted a follow-up piece to 8BIT on buying a C64, its derivatives, and additional C64-related kit secondhand. As this is far too good to miss, but too long to squeeze in here, it will be run in full next issue.

He has also volunteered his services as a writer to anyone running a C64-related fanzine or magazine. I don't know if Commodore Format are taking on freelancers at the moment (Karen, are you reading this?), but I can confirm his submissions require only the minimum of editing.

Lastly, would existing fanzine editors please note he is very particular about copyright matters, especially as it covers his 8BIT submissions, so please contact me before reproducing any part of his articles for this magazine elsewhere. Thank you from him, and thank him from me. BW.



## NEW FROM AMSTRAD

Did you see the Money Programme 'special' on the changing fortunes of Amstrad on Sunday 5th March on BBC2 at 7pm? No, neither did anyone else, as it was replaced at the last minute by a rather hastily put together programme on the Barings Bank collapse. The 'special' was rescheduled for 18th March but reduced to half its length. The bit that was cut out to allow room for the originally scheduled item for 18th March was some news for 8-bit computer users. I am proud to announce it here first - a real scoop for 8BIT.

How I got on to this is through my connections at BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, for which I do weekly drama reviews and also co-produce their serial 'Fen Market.' My co-producer, Steve Somers, who also presents the weekday afternoon show, knows of my interest in 8-bits through the fact that I had commented on more than one occasion about the rather battered PCWs (an 8256 and a 8512, both with Locoscript 2) which he uses in the Peterborough office to write letters to the 'Fen Market' cast and others. On the 23rd February, the news editor had told *him* that the office might soon be getting an upgrade for the 8256 (at last) that was "backwardly compatible."

I queried this when he told me on Friday 24th February and it got more interesting the further I followed it back. The route was: (1) Steve Somers, (2) Neil Follett (BBC Radio Cambs. News Editor), (3) Jane Ellison (Editor of the money program and friend of Neil Follett), (4) Stephen Pettingell (Freelance reporter for the Money Programme), (5) Andy Tetherington (Asst PR spokesman for Amstrad PLC).

I'll cut to the main point: Amstrad have developed a new 8-bit computer which will be launched at the beginning of May 1995. Rather than adopt the usual "nothing's happening until it's announced" line which the company has previously maintained, The Money Programme was to have been the first hint of things to come. Perhaps Alan Sugar has picked up some marketing tips from Bill Gates, whose carefully managed leaks about the new version of Windows have kept interest in Microsoft riding high? Perhaps the changing fortunes of Amstrad have encouraged the man and his company to reconsider his first principles of early success? Who knows? Undoubtedly, the man can spot an opening in the market and exploit it as he's proved several times before.

But what's the lowdown on the new machine? 8BIT has it first. The new machine, to be called the PC8, will be available in only two options, each with a 14" colour monitor. Both models, to be called the PC8A and PC8B, will have a keyboard essentially similar to the PCW10, but with a row of 9 double-width reprogrammable 'Hot Keys' added above the top numbers/punctuation line. There will also be a bank of f-keys on the right hand side of the keyboard as usual. I am told certain keys are "colour toned" to aid visual recognition. A carry-over from the NC100 series of notepad computers?

The main processor used will be a Z85c, a completely updated version of the Z80 as used in many of the original 8-bit computers. The main advantage will be that the chip *can* be clocked to run *five times faster* but that Amstrad in their wisdom have fitted a five-position switch on the back of the computer to allow slowing it down!

Another feature of the chip is that it accepts a kind of external emulation setup procedure. Using combinations of DIP switches settings like those of printers, the default at startup can be set to the following basic modes: (1) PCW (2) CPC (3) Spectrum A (4) Spectrum B [what?-ed] (5) Sam Coupé and, most surprisingly, (6) Commodore 64. Yes, the new machine will run software originally designed for *all* the main 8-bit computers (except MSX). Apparently, with Commodore's changing fortunes, the deal with Amstrad was seen as being in both company's long-



term interests. I am sure you can imagine the tone in the PR man's voice as he gave me that bit!

The DOS handling chips are also quite radical. Essentially, the machines do not come with a standard external drive, whether tape or disc. These have to be bought separately and fitted to one of the four drive ports on the back of the computer, but both computers are (allegedly) fully backwardly compatible and will accept plug-in drives (3", 3½" or 5¼") previously designed for the computers emulated by the DIP switches. There is also a DIN tape connection socket and the M drive for temporary program storage is carried forward from the PCWs.

Format detection is automatic and also covers all the main big formats developed to date. So don't design any more, please! I asked about the (lack of) availability of 3" drives and discs and he replied rather cryptically "wait and see." And yes, theoretically, it is possible to have any combination of disc drives connected to the four disc drive ports, with auto-detection working on each. "That," he said, rather patronisingly, "is the whole point of the new machine."

The Basic supplied is apparently a rather strange hybrid (his words) featuring the best characteristics of all the various machines [this, I have got to see-ed]. A new version of CP/M (version 5) with related utility programs will be available, initially only upon payment of an upgrade fee with the return of original system discs from one of the old computers, but possibly later as new software.

Other connections fitted around the case include two ports for mouse/joystick/joystick connections, two other input sockets which can be used to connect a cartridge port adaptor (available late '95) or other external ROMs, an RS232 interface (for a modem, among other things), and an industry-standard 8-bit serial printer port. There is no analogue joystick port or light gun connector, but a light gun can be used through the second joystick port, if required.

With three cable connections and some of the power supply and drive circuitry in the monitor case, there is no easy provision for connection to an alternative external monitor. Apparently, the company are satisfied that the quality of theirs does not leave an opening for third-party suppliers. No details are yet available on sound handling, apart from the fact that there is 3 channel stereo sound to two inbuilt speakers. There will be 4096 colours available on-screen from a palette of 65536. More than enough to satisfy most people, I should think. Up to 4096 sprites can be defined by software.

The main software companies still in the 8-bit market have had their software tested (not always with their knowledge, I believe) and "no insurmountable problems are foreseen." Apparently, Amstrad have learnt (at last) from previous new product launches.

So that's about it. I have saved the best part to last. The difference between the PC8A and PC8B is that the PC8A has *only* 1meg of RAM as standard while the PC8B has a whopping 5meg, and both are further expandable. The prices will be announced towards the end of April and are not expected to Fool anyone, whereas I rather hope this whole tissue of falsehoods has. Spaghetti fresh off the tree, anyone?

# COMMODORE MAGIC

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## VERY ATTRACTIVE SHORTS

HOT NEWS: at the time of writing, Wizard Games in Scarborough still have supplies of ex-software house 3" discs at the very fair price of £1 each or £7.99 for 10 *including postage*. You can reformat them for your computer if it has a 3" drive. For their address see their advertisement elsewhere in 8BIT, or phone 01723 376586 to order that way.

Help! Panic! Roy Firth is trying to make a new power supply lead for his Spectrum +2A (recently purchased). It ends in a 6-pin DIN plug (5 round and one in the centre) and he has 2 reds, 1 blue, 1 black and 2 yellows to connect. You can write to him at 7, Burned Grove, Shelf, HALIFAX, W Yorks. HX3 7PU.

Here's some more *good* news: a new stockist of equipment and software for 8-bits: TVA Services shop is at 100, Nantwich Road, CREWE, Cheshire CW2 6AT. The phone number is 01270 500031. They are on the lookout for more 8-bit hardware, peripherals and software to sell, so if you are a publisher (large or small) give them a call. TVA Services also operate a mail order service through the ubiquitous Leon Bebbington. Contact *him* for further details at 348, Station Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 3DG or phone him on 01606 861647.

SD Microsystems now have a new catalogue available which covers their extensive range of goods for 8-bit and PC computers. To get your copy, send an SSAE, mentioning which computer(s) you use, to SD Microsystems (8BM), PO Box 24, ATTLEBOROUGH, Norfolk NR17 1HL. To order, telephone 01953 483750.

I've just got a letter from Mike Mee referring to a gold CD-ROM for a Spectrum, and the Spectrum Internet site in Chile. More news as I get it. This is not an April Fool!

Next meetings for the South Essex PCW Club: 6th April and 11th May. Phone 01268 415255 for details.

And *this* comes from the Softsell newsletter: WN Richardson is offering a universal 3½" drive (DIY or ready-assembled) for all Spectrums. Prices vary from £28 upwards according to specification, but up to 4Mb (wow!) is available. Phone or Fax: 01494 871319 for full details.

Did you know there is an Amstrad page in Writing magazine? Neither did I until now. It's written by Donny Gluckstein and a recent issue (Jan '95) covered ProLink Plus, a connection system to connect a PCW with a Notepad or other PC. With the family history magazine, Family Tree, giving coverage of genealogical computing, including programs for 8-bit computers.

It seems I may have been rather ahead of myself with the news of ZAT's demise last issue. David Ledbury, editor of Sam Prime, has rung to tell me that ZAT will continue after all, but under the new editorship of whoever was editor of Fish until recently. More news as I get it.....

Apparently CP/M, the operating system covered in an earlier 8BIT, is available in its v2.2 incarnation for the SAM Coupé, and a CP/M v3.1 (aka Plus) lookalike is also about. So now we know it is available for PCW, CPC, Spectrum and Coupé. How about for a C64/128, anyone?

The piece I compiled on 3" discs for issue 3 has now been reprinted or used as the basis of an article in six other magazines, to my knowledge, so far. And while I'm feeling smug, 8Bit Mart (8BIT's predecessor) received a good review and some very kind comments in the CPC magazine WACCI last month. I love you too. Good grief, what a feast of mutual praise and sycophancy this is becoming.



## COMING SOON TO 8BIT

The big Home Publishing With Style series, a round-up of the 8-bit computer magazines and fanzines, genealogical information recording on the cheap, 'Magic Eye' 3-D pictures created on an 8-bit, how PCWs and BBCs are still in use at the BBC today, around the Clubs - national and local, taming your inkjet without a whip, more Weird Wired World leaks, Faxing with an 8-bit, detailed special features on Spectrums and PCWs in the "I've got a..." series, more Internet/E-mail stuff, a readers' survey (well, everyone else does 'em!), and readers' letters, but only if you send any which are suitable for publication - all contributions welcome.

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